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THE GUIDE AND THE WOMAN

Photograph by Lisi Jessen of the Volksbühne production

MASSES AND MAN

A FRAGMENT OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY ERNST TOLLER

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN
BY VERA MENDEL

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Toller

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WORLD-REVOLUTION :
MOTHER OF NEW
POWER AND RHYTHM,
MOTHER OF NEW
PEOPLES AND PATTERNS.
RED FLAMES THE CENTURY IN BLOOD OF EXPIATION :
THE EARTH NAILS ITSELF
TO THE CROSS.

TO THE WORKERS

193998

This play was first put on paper in October, 1919, the first year of the German revolution, in the prison-fortress of Niederschœnenfeld.

THE AUTHOR TO THE PRODUCER
OCTOBER 1921

CERTAIN critics have deplored the fact that your production of this play weakens its contrasting elements of reality and dream by wrapping the pictures of " reality " in the same visionary atmosphere as that which rightly surrounds the " dream pictures." I want to tell you myself that you have carried out my meaning. These pictures of " reality " are not realism, are not local colour ; the protagonists (except for Sonia) are not individual characters. Such a play can only have a spiritual, never a concrete, reality.

In my political capacity, I proceed upon the assumption that units, groups, representatives of various social forces, various economic functions, have a real existence ; that certain relations between human beings are objective realities. As an artist, I recognize that the validity of these " facts " is highly questionable. (" It further remains to be determined whether we exist as individuals.")

I see convicts in the prison yard, sawing wood with a monotonous rhythm. In sympathy, I think : these are men. This one may be a workman, the next a farmer, the next a clerk . . . I see the room in which the workman lived, his little peculiarities, the characteristic gestures with which he threw away a match, or kissed a woman, or came out of the factory gates in the evening. I see the broad-backed farmer and the narrow-chested little clerk just as clearly. Then—suddenly—they are no longer human beings, X and Y and Z, but dreadful puppets dimly aware of the compelling fate that governs them.

Two women once walked past the window of my cell, while I was clinging to the iron bars. Apparently two old maids. Both had short white hair and dresses identical in shape, colour and cut ; both carried grey umbrellas with white dots and both waggled their heads.

Not for one moment did I see these as " realistic human beings " going for a walk in the narrow prison lane of a " realistic " Neuburg. It was a dance of death by two old maids, one old maid and her mirrored death, that stared me in the face.

" Masses and Man," considered as a whole, is the presentation of such visionary insight. It literally broke out of me and was put on paper in two days and a half. The two nights, which, owing to my imprisonment, I was forced to spend in " bed " in a dark cell, were abysses of torment. My mind was tortured with visions of faces, daimonic faces, faces tumbling over each other in grotesque somersaults. In the mornings, shivering with fever, I sat down to write and did not stop until my fingers, clammy and trembling, refused to serve me. No one was allowed into my cell even to clean it ;

I turned with uncontrollable rage against any comrade who asked questions or wanted to help me.

The laborious and blissful work of pruning and remoulding lasted a year.

To-day I can look at the play critically. I recognize that its literary form was conditioned by the inward constraint of those days. Such raw confession violated my personal privacy and made it difficult to shape my own experience to æsthetic ends at a time when the clear objectivity of art was as yet impossible. The immensity of the days of revolution had not yet formed an ordered mental picture; it still lived on in me as a kind of torturing spiritual chaos.

I am surprized at the critics' lack of understanding. Possibly the play is insufficiently worked out. But, in any case, those ideas which, to us, who live close to the workers and understand and express their spiritual values, are a moving, rending, all-absorbing human experience, are nothing more than catchwords and newspaper phrases to "bourgeois" critics. Bourgeois society, and the art which reflects it, sees only idle wrangling about abstractions in a theme which, to the working classes, represents most tragic and shattering conflicts. The proletarian, on the other hand, is quite unmoved by the "profound" and "significant" expression of the spiritual experiences of the middle classes.

I need not dwell on the fact that proletarian art must ultimately rest on universal human interests, must, at its deepest, like life or death, embrace all human themes. It can only exist where the creative artist reveals that which is eternally human in the spiritual characteristics of the working people.

ERNST TOLLER.

FESTUNG NIEDERSCHOENENFELD.
October, 1921.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

WORKING MEN AND WOMEN
THE WOMAN (SONIA)
HER HUSBAND (A STATE OFFICIAL)
THE NAMELESS ONE
AN OFFICER
A PRIEST
TWO GIRL PRISONERS

In Sonia's dream-pictures :

SONIA
THE GUIDE

THE STATE OFFICIAL
BANKERS
THE PEOPLE'S SENTRIES
THE NAMELESS ONE
PRISONERS
SHADOWS

The third, fifth and seventh pictures are visionary abstracts of reality.

FIRST PICTURE

SCENE : *The back room of a workmen's tavern is indicated. In the middle a clumsy table. A* Woman *and some* Workmen *sit around it.*

FIRST WORKMAN : Pamphlets have been distributed :
We assemble in the large hall.
Early to-morrow the factories will close,
The masses are in ferment,
To-morrow will decide.
(*To the* Woman) Comrade, are you ready ?

THE WOMAN : I am ready.
With every breath power grows in me.
How I have longed and waited for this hour,
When heart's blood turns to words
And words to action !
Often I have been stricken—
Clenched my hands with rage and shame and pain !
When the vile papers bawl of victory
A million hands take hold of me,
A million voices shriek :
You, you, are guilty of our death !
Yes, every horse whose flanks tremble and foam
Dumbly accuses me—accuses.
If I to-morrow sound the trumpet of the Judgment
And if my conscience surges through the hall—
It is not I who shall proclaim the strike ;
Mankind is calling, strike ! and Nature strike !
I think the dog who leaps to greet me at my door

Barks, strike !
I think the flowing river hisses, strike !
My knowledge is so strong. The masses—
In resurrection, freed
From wordy snares woven by well-fed gentlemen—
Shall grow to be
The armies of humanity ;
And with a mighty gesture
Raise up the invisible citadel of peace . . .
Who bears the flag, the red flag,
Flag of beginnings ?

SECOND WORKMAN : You. They follow you.

Silence flickers.

THE WOMAN : If only all our agents keep the secret !
You think that the police know nothing ?
But what if troops surround the hall ?

FIRST WORKMAN : Whatever the police may know,
They do not know our final purpose.
Once that the masses fill the hall
They'll be a mighty flood which no police
Can shape to little splashing fountains.
Moreover the police are growing cautious ;
No longer drunk with power, they waver.
The troops are with us—
There are Soldiers' Councils everywhere.
To-morrow is decisive, comrade.

There is a knock at the door.

FIRST WORKMAN : Betrayed !

SECOND WORKMAN : But they must not take *you !*

FIRST WORKMAN : Only one door !

SECOND WORKMAN : Go by the window.

FIRST WORKMAN : The window gives upon a light shaft.

THE WOMAN : So near the battle—

Louder knocking. The door opens. The Woman's Husband *enters. His coat collar is turned up over his face. He looks round quickly and raises his bowler.*

THE WOMAN : This is—a friend.
Nothing to be afraid of . . .
You come to me—
You find me.

THE HUSBAND : Good evening.
(*Softly*) Please do not introduce me,
But may I speak to you ?

THE WOMAN : Comrades . . .

THE WORKMEN : Good night—
Until to-morrow !

THE WOMAN : Good night. Until to-morrow !
[*The* Workmen *go out.*]

THE HUSBAND : You realize
I do not come here as a helper.

THE WOMAN : Forgive my budding, momentary dream.

THE HUSBAND : Only your conduct, which dishonours me,
Forced me to come.

THE WOMAN . The honour of a citizen imperilled by my actions ?
Strange !
Then has the vote been taken ?
Does the majority
Threaten to oust you from its ranks ?

THE HUSBAND : I beg you, do not jest.
For I obey considerations which you flout ;
The code of gentlefolk
Is binding on me.

THE WOMAN : Stamping you and your like
To formulæ !

THE HUSBAND : Commanding our submission, our self-discipline . . .
You do not grasp my words.

THE WOMAN : I see your eyes.

THE HUSBAND : Do not confuse me.

THE WOMAN : You—you . . .

THE HUSBAND : To be brief,
I am about to limit your activities.

THE WOMAN : You . . .

THE HUSBAND : The urge you feel to help society
Can find an outlet in our circle.
For instance,
You could found homes for illegitimate children.
This is a reasonable field of action,
A witness to the gentle nurture which you scorn.
Even your so-called comrade-workmen
Despise unmarried mothers.

THE WOMAN : Go on, go on.

THE HUSBAND : You are not free to act.

THE WOMAN : I *am* free.

THE HUSBAND : I may expect some slight consideration,
Some tactfulness, if not some understanding.

THE WOMAN : I care for nothing
But the work we have to do.
I serve this work; and, understand me,
I *must* serve it.

THE HUSBAND : Let me dissect your motives :
The wish for wide activities
Governs your conduct.
I do not say the motives that determine
This wish, are anything but noble.

THE WOMAN : How every word you utter hurts me . . .
You know the pictures of Madonnas
In peasant homes ?

With hearts, sword-pierced, bleeding dark tears ;
Those ugly, pious, tender pictures,
So simple-minded and so great . . .
You—you . . .
Can you talk of my ambitions ?
What an abyss opens between us !
No idle wish has so transformed my fate ;
It was the bare necessity,
The need stored in my deepest being,
The need to be a human creature.
Necessity—oh ! understand—*necessity* transforms me—
Not mood, not occupation for an idle hour,
Need to be human, sways me.

THE HUSBAND : Need ? And have you a right
To speak of need ?

THE WOMAN : Oh let me be . . . my man,
I hold you, kiss your eyes.
You . . . speak no more.

THE HUSBAND : I would not willingly torment you—
This place—— Can we be overheard ?

THE WOMAN : Although a comrade hear us—
They need no code of honour
To be considerate.
If only you could understand them, feel their need—
Which is *our* need—must be !
You have abased them ;
And their humiliation
Dishonours you.
So you have written your own doom . . .
Hold back the pity in your eyes !
I am not sentimental or neurotic.
No, I belong to them because fine feelings

And wretched little hours appointed to good works
Can only soothe our vanity and weakness!
I tell you, there are comrades
Who blush for you—
Unless they laugh aloud,
As I laugh now!

THE HUSBAND: Then you must know the truth:
The secret service knows—
The authorities are watching you.
Wife, I have sworn allegiance to the State—
You cripple my career.

THE WOMAN: And so——?

THE HUSBAND: I tell you frankly
That I shall suffer for your actions;
Which, I assure you, touch my feelings also—
The more that you will harm the State
As well as my career—
For you support the enemy in our midst.
That gives me grounds for a divorce.

THE WOMAN: In that case—if I harm you—
If I am a hindrance on your path—

THE HUSBAND: There is still time.

THE WOMAN: In that case——
I am ready.
I bear the blame of my own actions.
You need not fear that the divorce will harm you.
You . . .
You . . . my arms reach for you
In my great need.
My blood is blossoming for you—
Without you I shall be a faded leaf.

You are the dew that causes my unfolding,
You are the mighty March wind throwing torches
Into my thirsty veins . . .
There have been nights and cries of budding boys
Rearing and prancing in the flush of youth.
Oh! carry me away into the fields, the parks, the alleys.
So humbly I will kiss your eyes . . .
I think I shall be weak without you,
Boundlessly weak . . .
Forgive me, *this* is weakness.
I see your case and you are justified.
For, look, to-morrow I shall stand before the masses,
To-morrow I shall speak.
I shall attack the State
To which you have sworn loyalty;
To-morrow
I shall tear down the mask
That hides grimacing murder.

THE HUSBAND: But this is treason
To the State!

THE WOMAN: Your State makes war,
Your State betrays the people,
Your State robs, squeezes and oppresses
The disinherited,
The people.

THE HUSBAND: The State is sacred, war saves it alive;
Peace is a phantom of neurotics
And war only a broken truce of arms.
War is the rule, the constant life of States,
Threatened, without, within, by enemies.

THE WOMAN : How can a body live
Eaten by pestilence and fire ?
You have not seen the naked body politic—
The worms devouring it,
The private purses battening on human lives.
You have not seen . . . I know, you have sworn loyalty ;
You do your duty and your conscience is at rest.

THE HUSBAND : Is this your last decision ?

THE WOMAN : My last decision.

THE HUSBAND : Then—good night.

THE WOMAN : Good night.

As the husband is about to go.

May I go with you ?
To-day for the last time . . .
Or am I shameless ?
Or am I shameless—
Shameless to my last drop of blood ?

The Woman *follows her husband. The stage darkens.*

SECOND PICTURE

(*A Dream Picture.*)

The Interior of the Stock Exchange is indicated. At the desk the Official Recorder. *Round him* Bankers *and* Brokers. *The* Recorder *has the face of the* Husband.

THE RECORDER : I record.

FIRST BANKER : Munition factories—
350.

SECOND BANKER : Make it
400.

THIRD BANKER : I sell
At 400.

The Fourth Banker *drags the* Third *forward. In the background there is a murmur of bidders and sellers.*

FOURTH BANKER (*to* THIRD BANKER) :
Heard the news ?
Retreat imperative.
The great offensive
Is going to fail.

THIRD BANKER : And the reserves ?

FOURTH BANKER : The stuff
Is poor in quality.

THIRD BANKER : The food inadequate ?

FOURTH BANKER : That also.
Although
Professor Uhde thinks
That 95 per cent of rye
Is a luxurious diet.

THIRD BANKER : And leadership ?

FOURTH BANKER : Is excellent.

THIRD BANKER : Not enough alcohol ?

FOURTH BANKER : The distilleries
Work at high pressure.

THIRD BANKER : Then what is lacking ?

FOURTH BANKER : The General at head-quarters
Has sent for ninety-three professors,
Including the official Gluber
Who's in our pocket—
Results are rumoured.

THIRD BANKER : Which are ?

FOURTH BANKER : To be kept dark
In bourgeois circles.

THIRD BANKER : Does a perverted love
Weaken the troops ?

FOURTH BANKER : Strangely, no.
For man hates man.
There is a lack.

THIRD BANKER : What's lacking ?

FOURTH BANKER : The mechanism of life
Has been revealed.

THIRD BANKER : What's lacking ?

FOURTH BANKER : The masses
Require incentive.

THIRD BANKER : What's lacking ?

FOURTH BANKER : Just love.

THIRD BANKER : That's quite enough !
And so the war
Our instrument,
Our mighty instrument,
Which pulls the strings—
That Kings and States,
Ministers, Parliaments,
The Press, the Church,
Must dance—
The round world over,
The oceans over,
Dance—

Our war is lost,
You say, is lost !
Is that the balance ?

FOURTH BANKER : No, you miscalculate.
The flaw is found,
Accounts will balance ?

THIRD BANKER : How so ?

FOURTH BANKER : Quite internationally.

THIRD BANKER : Is that known ?

FOURTH BANKER : The contrary.
We dress it up—
It's purely patriotic
And independent
Of our depreciated currency.

THIRD BANKER : Well underwritten ?

FOURTH BANKER : The biggest banks
Support the enterprise.

THIRD BANKER : And profits ?
Dividends ?

FOURTH BANKER : Come rolling in
Most steadily.

THIRD BANKER : It sounds a good thing ;
What's the product ?

FOURTH BANKER : We call it
Convalescent Home
For strengthening the will to victory :
In fact it is
State-managed brothel.

THIRD BANKER : Splendid ! I'll take up
One hundred thousand.
One more question
Who organizes ?

FOURTH BANKER : Experienced generals,
Connoisseurs
Of tested regulations.

THIRD BANKER : Is the system
Planned ?

FOURTH BANKER : By regulation,
As I said.
Three prices
And three categories.
Brothel for officers,
Stay overnight.
Brothel for non-coms,
Stay one hour.
And the third brothel,
Men in the ranks,
Stay fifteen minutes.

THIRD BANKER : I thank you
When does market open ?

FOURTH BANKER : At any moment.

There is a noise in the background.
The Third *and* Fourth Bankers *retire to the background.*

THE RECORDER : Newly admitted :
National Convalescent Home,
Limited Company.

FIRST BANKER : I have no commission to buy.

SECOND BANKER : The dividends do not tempt me.

THIRD BANKER : I will take up
One hundred thousand
At par.

THE RECORDER : I record.

FOURTH BANKER : I, the same number.

FIRST BANKER (*to* SECOND BANKER) :
He's a cool bidder.
What do you think ?

SECOND BANKER : A telegram !
The battle
On the western front
Is lost.

FIRST BANKER : Gentlemen !
The battle
On the western front
Is lost !

Calls, shouting, screeching.

VOICES : Lost !

VOICE : Munition factories
Are offered
At one fifty.

VOICE : Liquid-fire-thrower Trust.
On offer.

VOICE : War-prayerbook Limited,
On offer.

VOICE : Poison-gas-works.
On offer.

VOICE : War loan
Is on offer.

THIRD BANKER : I take up another
One hundred thousand.

VOICE : Oho !
In such a slump ?

VOICE : Who was it said the battle
Is lost ?

VOICE : Is the news true ?
Or meant to rig the market ?
He coolly takes up
Twice one hundred thousand !

SECOND BANKER : It's a bear drive.
I'll buy at
One fifty.

VOICE : I'll make it
Two hundred.

VOICE : I'll buy at
Three hundred.

VOICE : Who'll sell at
Four hundred ?
I'm bidding.

THE RECORDER : I record.

FOURTH BANKER (*to* THIRD BANKER) :
The sly fox guesses !

THIRD BANKER : Forgive the question,
Our most powerful instrument
Is saved ?

FOURTH BANKER : How can you doubt it ?
The mechanism of life
Is simple.
There was a leakage ;
Now discovered.
And stopped.
These passing fluctuations of our stock
Are negligible—
Essential :
The stability
Of the mechanic law.
In consequence
Our system saved !

THE RECORDER : I record.

The Guide *enters. His face magically resembles that of the* Woman ; *on it, lines of death and lines of intensest life are interwoven. He leads the* Woman.

THE GUIDE: Gentlemen,
You record
Too hastily.
Your system governing the blood in human veins !
Your system working upon human creatures !
There's a flaw in your system :
Human nature.
One spurning foot
And the whole mechanism
Is a broken plaything.
So beware !
(*To the* Woman)
Speak, you.

THE WOMAN : (*Softly*)
Gentlemen,
These are men and women.
I say again
Are *men* and *women.*
The Guide and the Woman fade, as paling shadows. Sudden silence

THIRD BANKER : Did you hear ?
A mine disaster,
It seems.
People in want.

FOURTH BANKER : Then I suggest
A charitable entertainment,
A dance around the desk
Of the Exchange.
A dance
To cope with want;
The proceeds to the poor.
Gentlemen, if you please,
A dance !
I will contribute
A share
In the War Convalescent's Home,
Limited.

VOICE : But women ?

FIRST BANKER : As many as you wish.
Just tell the porter
To order five hundred
Accomplished girls.
Meanwhile—

THE BANKERS : We will contribute,
We will dance,
The proceeds go
To the poor !
Music of clinking gold coins. The Bankers in top hats dance a fox-trot round the desk.
The stage darkens.

The stage remains darkened.
Chorus of the Masses (*as from far off*)

THE MASSES:

We, from eternity imprisoned
In the abyss of towering towns;
We, laid up on the altar of mechanic
And mocking systems; we,
Whose face is blotted in the night of tears,
Who from eternity are motherless—
From the abysses of the factories we cry:
When shall we live in love?
When shall we work at will?
When is deliverance?

The stage grows lighter. A large hall is indicated. On the platform, a long narrow table. The Woman *sits on the left. Working men and women closely packed in the hall.*

GROUP OF YOUNG WORKING WOMEN:

So battle breeds fresh battle!
No longer let us dally with our masters,
No longer turn aside nor weaken in our purpose,
But let a body of comrades
Sow the machines with dynamite;
And factories shall scatter in the air
To-morrow.
For the machines
Herd us like beasts for slaughter—
Machines
Hold us cramped in a vice—
Machines
Day by day beat
Out of our bodies
Rivets and screws—

Point three inch screws—point five inch screws—
Till our eyes wither and our hands decay
Upon our living bodies.
Down with the factories ! Down
With the machines !

SINGLE VOICES : (*Shouting in the hall.*)
Down with the factories ! Down
With the machines !

THE WOMAN : I too was blind and desperate,
Battered, devoured, tormented by machines ;
I shouted : Tear them down ! . . .
It was a dream.
And evil is the dream that blurs your eyes,
You children, scared with darkness !
For see, this is the twentieth century ;
The case is judged, is settled.
Machines can never be undone.
Scatter the earth with dynamite
And let a single night of action
Blow factories to nothing—
Before spring comes
They will have risen again
More cruel than before.
Factories may no longer be the masters
And men the means.
Let factories be servants
Of decent living ;
And let the soul of man
Conquer the factories.

GROUP OF YOUNG WORKING MEN :
Then let us perish with the factories.
We waste ourselves with words of hate and fury.
The masters build their palaces, while our brothers

Rot in the trenches.
Meadows and dancing, colours, play,
Blossom about us—in our nights
We read of it and howl to heaven
A craving lives in us for knowledge . . .
But when *they* took the best of life
It turned to evil . . .
Sometimes we touch it in the theatres—
So tender and so fine, it mocks
Us with its beauty.
They have destroyed our youth in schools,
Our souls are broken and our lives
Shout want—raw want.
We are the steaming stench of want
What else are we to-day ?
We will not wait !

GROUP OF FARM LABOURERS :

We have been hounded off our mother earth.
Rich masters buy the land
As they buy venal women ;
Make sport of her—
Our blessed mother earth ;
Thrust our rough arms
Into munition factories,
Where we, uprooted, wither.
Joyless towns break our strength.
We want the land !
The land for all !

THE MASSES IN THE HALL :

The land for all !

THE WOMAN :

When I passed through the poor quarters,
Where grey rain drips
Through shingled roofs
And fungus grows on bedroom walls,
A sick man stuttered :
The street is better—almost better—

We live in sties, don't we ? in sties !
His eyes were shy
And I was shamed with him . . .
But would you know the way, brothers,
The only remedy for us
Weak ones,
Who hate the cannons ?
Strike ! Not a hand's turn more !
To strike is action.
Then, strong as rocks,
We weak ones need no violence
To burst our chains ;
There is no weapon made
Can conquer us !
Call up our voiceless armies ! Call
A strike !
Hear me :
I call a strike !
These six years past
Moloch devours our bodies
And in our streets
Women with child break down—
Whom hunger makes too weak to carry
The burden of the unborn.
Out of your homes this bitter want,
Pestilence, madness and raw hunger glares :
But over there, see, over there,
The money-bags spue forth their orgies
And hard-won victories are drowned
In foaming wine.
The thrills of luxury dance fatefully
Round golden altars.—But out there,
See the pale faces of your brothers
And feel their bodies clammy in the chill
Of evening !
Do you smell corruption ?
Do you hear screams ?

Tell me, do you hear them cry :
" Your turn has come !
We powerless, we
Chained to the guns,
We shout to you :
You ! Bring us help !
You ! build a bridge for us ! " . . .
Hear me : I call a strike !
Who henceforth feeds munition works,
Betrays his brother—
More than betrays—
Slays his own brother !
And you, women !
Remember the old legend
Of women stricken with eternal barrenness
For forging arms !
Think of your men who suffer !
I call a strike !

THE MASSES IN THE HALL :

We call a strike !
We call :
Strike !

The Nameless One *comes out of the Masses, hurries to the platform and stands to the right of the table.*

THE NAMELESS :

He who would build a bridge
Must look to his foundations.
A strike to-day
Is but a bridge without the piles.
We need more than a strike.
To strike, at best
Will force a peace this once ;
A truce, no more.
War must be ended
For all eternity !
But first, a last, most ruthless fight !
What use to end the war ?

The peace you will create
Still leaves your fate unaltered
On this side lies a show of peace
And the old doom for you,
On that, a battle and a new
Order on earth.
You fools, break the foundations! Break,
I say, break the foundations!
Then let the mouldering house bolstered with gold
Be swept away by the avenging flood.
The system that we build will be more habitable;
The factories belong to workers
And not to my lord Capital.
The time is past when our bowed backs
Perched him up greedily to scan for distant treasure,
Plot wars to enslave foreign folk
And instigate the screech of lying papers:
"Your country! For your country!"—
Drowning their truer tune:
"For me! for me!"—
That time is past!
The masses of all countries cry together:
The factories belong to workers; and the power
To workers.
All is for all!
I call more than a strike,
I call: a war!
I call: the Revolution!
Our enemy up there
Cares not for pretty speeches.
Your power to match his power!
Force . . . force!

A VOICE: Arms!

THE NAMELESS: Yes, arms are all you need,

Storm the town hall and fetch them ;
And let your war-cry be :
Victory !

THE WOMAN : Hear me !
I will not—

THE NAMELESS : Be silent, comrade !
Handclasping, prayers and passionate pleas
Beget no children ;
Consumptives are not cured with slops and soups ;
To fell a tree one needs
The axe.

THE WOMAN : Hear me !
I will not have fresh murder.

THE NAMELESS : Be silent, comrade—
What do *you* know ?
I grant you feel our need.
But have you stood ten hours together in a mine,
Your homeless children herded in a hovel ?
Ten hours in mines, evenings in hovels,
This, day by day, the fate of masses.
You are not Masses !
I am the Masses !
Masses are fate.

THE MASSES IN THE HALL :
Are fate. . . .

THE WOMAN : Only consider,
Masses are helpless,
Masses are weak.

THE NAMELESS : How blind you are !
Masses are master !
Masses are might !

THE MASSES IN THE HALL :
Are might !

THE WOMAN : My feelings urge me darkly—
But yet my conscience cries out : No !

THE NAMELESS : Be silent, comrade,
For the Cause !
The individual, his feelings and his conscience,
What do they count ?
The Masses count !
Consider this
One single bloody battle ; then,
For ever peace.
No mockery of peace, as formerly,
Concealing war—
War of the strong upon the weak,
The war for loot, the war for greed !
Consider this :
An end to misery !
Consider :
A crime fades to a fairy story
In this the dawn of freedom for all peoples.
Think you I counsel lightly ?
War is necessity for us.
Your words will split us—
For the Cause
Be silent.

THE WOMAN : You . . . are . . . the Masses.
You . . . are . . . right.

THE NAMELESS : Lay the foundations of the bridge !
Whoever stands across our path,
Be trodden down !
Masses are deeds !

THE MASSES IN THE HALL :
(*Rushing out.*)
Deeds !

The stage darkens.

FOURTH PICTURE

(*A Dream Picture.*)

A courtyard surrounded by high walls is indicated. Night. In the middle of the court, standing on the ground, a lantern dribbles scanty light. From the corners of the courtyard the People's Sentries *appear.*

FIRST SENTRY : (*Sings*)
My mother bore me—
In a ditch one night.
Lalala *la*
Hm, hm.

SECOND SENTRY : Father spawned and ignored me
In his cups one night.

ALL THE SENTRIES : Lalala *la*
Hm, hm.

THIRD SENTRY : Three years they shore me—
'Tis a gaolbird's plight.

ALL THE SENTRIES : Lalala *la*
Hm, hm.

From anywhere, the Nameless *approaches with ghostly, noiseless steps. Stands beside the lantern.*

FIRST SENTRY : My father maintained me—
But forgot to pay.

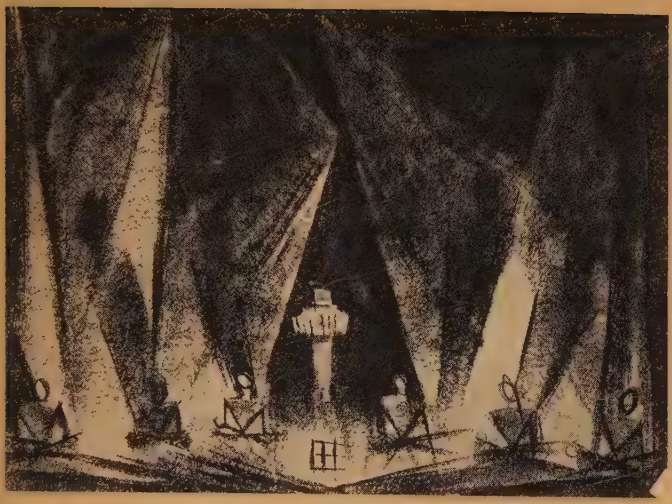
ALL THE SENTRIES : Lalala *la*
Hm, hm.

SECOND SENTRY : My mother—in pain she
Walks the streets, as they say.

ALL THE SENTRIES : Lalala *la*
Hm, hm.

THIRD SENTRY : The bourgeois complained of me
On election day.

ALL THE SENTRIES : Lalala *la*
Hm, hm.



FOURTH PICTURE

Design by Hans Strobach. Photograph by Lisi Jessen

THE NAMELESS : Open the ball,
I give you a tune.

SENTRIES : Halt ! Who goes there ?

THE NAMELESS : Did I ask you
For your names,
Who are nameless ?

SENTRIES : Give us the password.

THE NAMELESS : Masses are nameless.

SENTRIES : Are nameless,
As we all.

THE NAMELESS : I open your ball—
I, herald of action.

The Nameless *begins to play a concertina. Provocative rhythms, now sensually soothing, now stormily passionate. A* man condemned to death, *wearing a rope round his neck, steps out of the darkness.*

THE CONDEMNED : In the name of all those
Condemned to die :
We beg a last mercy :
Invite us to dance.
Dance is the kernel
Of all things :
Life,
Born of a dance,
Urges to dance—
Dance of desire,
Dance of the years
And dance of death.

SENTRIES : The last request
Of the condemned
Must always be fulfilled !
So we invite you.

THE NAMELESS : Come ! Here we are all alike
Shadows.

THE CONDEMNED : All those condemned to death !
Put down your coffins
And stand up
For the last dance.

Others condemned to death, wearing ropes round their necks, come out of the darkness [*with harlots*]. *They dance with the* Sentries *around the* Nameless.

SENTRIES : (*Singing*)
In a ditch she bore me . . .
He spawned and ignored me. . . .

They go on dancing. After a short time :

In gaol they shore me. . . .

They go on dancing. The Nameless *suddenly breaks off. The harlots and the condemned run into a corner of the yard. Night swallows them. The* Sentries *resume their posts. Silence gathers about the* Nameless. *The* Guide, *in the shape of a* Sentry, *has come through the wall. He holds the* Woman *close to him.*

THE GUIDE : The road is hard to go,
But the road's end
Rewards you.
Look there,
The play is just beginning.
If the sensation tempts you,
Take a part.

A Sentry *brings in* the Prisoner (*face of the* Husband) and *leads him to the* Nameless.

THE NAMELESS : Condemned
By the tribunal.

SENTRY : He condemned

Himself.
He fired on us.

PRISONER : Death !

THE NAMELESS : Are you afraid ?
Listen :
Sentry, speak out.
Who taught us
The death sentence ?
Who armed us ?
Who cried " hero," and " noble deeds " ?
Who hallowed violence ?

SENTRY : Schools.
Barracks.
War :
Everlasting.

THE NAMELESS : Force ! . . . Force !
Why did you shoot ?

PRISONER : I swore allegiance
To the State.

THE NAMELESS : Then you die
For *your* Cause.

SENTRIES : Stand up—
Back to the wall.

THE NAMELESS : Rifles loaded ?

SENTRIES : Loaded.

PRISONER : (*At the wall*)
O life !
Life !

The Woman *tears herself away from the* Guide.

WOMAN : Hold fire !
That is my husband.
Forgive him
As I forgive him humbly.
Forgiveness is so strong,
Beyond all struggle !

THE NAMELESS : Do *they* forgive
Us.

WOMAN : *Do they wage war*
For men and women?
Do they fight
For all mankind?

THE NAMELESS : Only the Masses count.

SENTRIES : Back to the wall!

SENTRY : Pardon is weakness. . . .
I fled from our enemies
Yesterday.
They had lined me up, back to the wall,
Scarred with their lashes.
Beside me the man
Appointed to kill me.
With my own hands they compelled me
To dig my own grave.
The photographers waited to brand
their plates
Greedy for murder. . . .
I spit upon the Revolution
If we are to be fooled
And mocked by murderers.
I spit upon the
Revolution.

SENTRIES : Back to the wall!

The face of the Prisoner *turns into the face of a* Sentry. *The* Woman *speaks to a* Sentry.

THE WOMAN : Yesterday
You stood up
Back to the wall.
To-day you are standing
Back to the wall.
You are he who to-day
Stands, back to the wall.
Man, you are he!

Know yourself, man,
You are he !

SENTRY : Only the Masses count.

THE WOMAN : Only Man counts.

ALL THE SENTRIES : Only the Masses count.

WOMAN : I offer up
Myself
To mankind.

Ugly laughter from the Sentries.

WOMAN : (*Stands beside her* Husband)
Then shoot me !
I renounce.

The stage darkens.

The Hall is indicated. Dawn creeps through the windows. A dreary light falls on the platform. The Woman *sits to the left of the long table. The* Nameless *to the right. At the doors of the hall are the* People's Sentries. *In the hall isolated working men and women crouch at the tables.*

THE WOMAN : Has any news
Come this last hour ?
I slept. Forgive me, Comrade.

THE NAMELESS : Message comes after message.
Battle is battle, bloody play
Of forces and cool judgment.
Before midnight we occupied the station ;
At one, lost it again.
And now our forces
Again advance to the assault
We hold the post office
And at this moment
The wires are giving out
News to all peoples of our deeds
Done for the Cause.

WOMAN : Our work, our Cause !
O holy words !

NAMELESS : Holy words, Comrade !
They call for steely armour,
They call for more than burning, tender-hearted speech,
They call for ruthless war.

For whole seconds silence flickers in the hall.

WOMAN : Comrade, even now

FIFTH PICTURE

Design by Hans Strobach. Photograph by Lisi Jessen

I cannot bear it.
Battle with violence enslaves.

THE NAMELESS : Battle with spiritual force
Also enslaves.
Do not be startled comrade,
I grasp naked realities.
If I believed as you believe
I should become a monk
Vowed to eternal silence.

Silence is about to settle heavily upon the hall. First Workman *comes in.*

FIRST WORKMAN : I am to report :
We have advanced three times
Against the station.
The square is heaped with dead.
The enemy is well entrenched and armed
With liquid flame, mines, poison gas.

THE NAMELESS : Three times you advanced.
The fourth time ?

FIRST WORKMAN : The fourth time never came—
The enemy
Ventured a sortie.

THE NAMELESS : You held your ground.
Do you need reinforcements ?

FIRST WORKMAN : We are shattered.

THE NAMELESS : We must expect such checks.
Listen : Go to the thirteenth district.
The reserves are there.
Go—hurry !

Workman goes.

THE WOMAN : Men have been killed, he said,
Hundreds of men,
Killed.
Did I not cry to heaven against war
Yesterday—and to-day
Suffer my brothers to be done to death ?

THE NAMELESS : There is confusion in your views.
In yesterday's war we were slaves.

THE WOMAN : And to-day ?

THE NAMELESS : In to-day's war we are free.

Silence is feverish.

THE WOMAN : In both wars . . . people . . .
In both wars . . . Man . . .

Silence reels.

A second Workman *rushes in.*

SECOND WORKMAN : The post office is lost !
Our men in flight !
No quarter from the enemy !
Prisoners' fate is death !

First Workman *hurries in.*

FIRST WORKMAN : I come from the thirteenth district—
My effort failed.
The streets are barricaded,
The district has surrendered,
Our men are handing over
Their arms.

THIRD WORKMAN : The town is lost !
Our work has failed !

THE WOMAN : Is doomed to fail.

THE NAMELESS : Once more : be silent, comrade !
Deeds cannot fail.
Although our forces be too weak to-day,
To-morrow fresh battalions thunder.

Fourth Workman *screams into the hall.*

FOURTH WORKMAN : They are advancing !
O horrible butchery !
My wife is shot ! My father
Shot !

THE NAMELESS : They have died for the Masses. . . .
Up with the barricades !
We still defend !

Our blood shall bear fruit!
Let them come!

Workmen *rush into the hall.*

FIFTH WORKMAN: They are mowing down the people:
Men, women, children—all!
Never surrender, to be killed
Like captive cattle!
They are mowing down the people. We must arm.
The laws of warfare saved the soldiers,
But *we* are shot down like wild beasts
Escaped from cages.
A price is on our heads.
But we have arms
And bourgeois prisoners.
I have ordered
Half to be shot—
The other half
Forms our shock troops.

THE NAMELESS: You avenge your brothers . . .
The Masses are revenge for the injustice
Of centuries.
The Masses are revenge!

THE WORKMEN: Revenge!

THE WOMAN: Stop! You are crazed with battle.
I bar your path.
The masses should be people bound together
By love.
Masses should be community.
Community is not revenge.
Community destroys the ground
And the foundation of all wrongs
And plants a seed of justice.
Humanity, taking revenge,
Shatters itself. . . .
Half of them shot?
That was not self-defence—

Blind rage—not service to the Cause !
Do you kill men
In the same spirit as the State
Killed men ?
Those men outside
Are under my protection !
I was prepared to silence
My conscience, for the Masses.
I cry :
Shatter the system !
But you would shatter
Mankind.
No, I cannot keep silence, not to-day !
Those prisoners are men,
Born in the blood of groaning mothers—
Are men, immutably our brothers—

THE NAMELESS : For the last time : Silence, comrade !
Force ! Force !
They do not spare our bodies :
This bitter battle is not to be won
By pious sentiments—
Pay no attention to this woman—
It is the idle babble of her sex.

THE WOMAN : I call a halt !
And you . . . who are you ?
Does lust of power, caged for centuries,
Impel you ?
Who . . . are you ?
O God . . . who are . . . you ?
Slayer or Saviour ?
Slayer . . . or . . . Saviour ?
Nameless—your face ?
You are . . . ?

THE NAMELESS : The Masses !

THE WOMAN : You . . . Masses !
You are more than I can bear !
I shield the men outside.
I have been many years your comrade ;

I know that you have suffered more than I.
I have grown up in sunlit rooms,
Have never known the pangs of hunger,
Nor heard the crazy rattle of decaying walls ;
Yet I feel with you,
Know you.
Look, I come as a begging child,
In all humility. O hear me :
Break the foundations of injustice,
Destroy the secret chains of servitude—
But throw away
The weapons of the mouldering centuries !
Revenge is not the will to new and living forms,
Revenge is not the Revolution ;
Revenge is but the axe that splits
The crystal, glowing, angry, iron will
To Revolution.

THE NAMELESS : How dare you, woman of your class,
Poison this hour of fate ?
I find another meaning in your words :
You shield your friends and first companions.
That is your deeper motive :
Treason ! you betray.

The Masses *in the hall crowd angrily round the* Woman.

A SHOUT : Intelligentzia !

A SHOUT : Stand her
Back to the wall !
Let her be shot !

THE NAMELESS : To shield the prisoners is treason.
This is the hour for action,
For ruthless action.

Who is not for us, is against.
Masses must live.

THE MASSES IN THE HALL :
Must live !

THE NAMELESS : I arrest you.

THE WOMAN : I shield . . . my friends . . . my first companions ?
No, I am shielding you !
You, who yourselves
Have lined yourselves up to be shot.
I shield our souls !
I shield mankind . . . to all eternity, mankind !
Insane denouncer—
You read fear into my words ?
I never chose so basely—
Oh, you lie . . . you lie. . . .
A Workman *enters the hall.*

WORKMAN : A prisoner is shouting
And shouting again
For our woman-leader.

THE NAMELESS : That is proof.

THE WOMAN : Once more . . . you lie.
Who wants to see me . . . who ?
Perhaps my husband.
Never again could I betray you for his sake.
You, only you, betray yourselves—
I know no more than that.
The Nameless *leaves the platform and disappears among the* Masses *in the hall.* Workmen *press in from outside.*

WORKMEN : Lost.

SHOUTS : Fly !
Fight !
Single shots heard outside. The Workmen *throng about the door.*

SHOUTS : The door is bolted !
Trapped like hares !

Silence, awaiting death.

SHOUT : To die !

Someone begins to sing the Internationale [or the Marseillaise] the rest join in. Mightily.

Suddenly, a brief volley of machine guns. The song breaks, crumbles. The principal and side entrances are burst open. Soldiers with rifles levelled stand in the doorways.

OFFICER : Resistance useless.
Hands up !
Hands up, I say !
[*One by one they put up their hands.*]
Where is your leader ?
[*To the* Woman.]
Put up your hands.
You disobey ?
Put on the handcuffs.

Soldiers *handcuff the* Woman. *The stage darkens.*

SIXTH PICTURE

(*A Dream Picture.*)

SCENE: *Boundless space. In its kernel a cage on which a ball of light plays. A* Prisoner *crouching in the cage* (*the face of the* Woman). *Beside the cage the* Guide *in the form of a* Warder.

THE PRISONER: Where am I?

THE WARDER: In the showhouse of humanity.

THE PRISONER: Drive away the shadows.

THE WARDER: Only you can drive them away.

From anywhere, grey, headless shadows.

FIRST SHADOW: Do you know me,
My slayer?
I was shot.

THE PRISONER: I am not
Guilty.

From anywhere, grey, headless shadows.

SECOND SHADOW: Me also
You have slain.

THE PRISONER: You lie.

From anywhere, grey, headless shadows.

THIRD SHADOW: And me
You have slain.

FOURTH SHADOW: And me.

FIFTH SHADOW: And me.

SIXTH SHADOW: And me.

THE PRISONER: Warder!
O Warder!

The Warder *laughs.*

THE WOMAN: I did not will
This blood.

FIRST SHADOW: But you kept silence.

SECOND SHADOW: Kept silence at the storming
Of the town hall.

SIXTH PICTURE

Design by Hans Strobach. Photograph by Lisi Jessen

THIRD SHADOW : Kept silence at the theft
Of weapons.

FOURTH SHADOW : Kept silence through the battle.

FIFTH SHADOW : Kept silence at the calling up
Of the reserves.

SIXTH SHADOW : You are guilty.

ALL SHADOWS : Guilty.

THE PRISONER : I wished to save the others
From death.

FIRST SHADOW : You deceive yourself. Before then
We were shot.

ALL SHADOWS : You
Are our slayer.

THE PRISONER : Then am I——

SHADOWS : Guilty.
Thrice guilty.

THE PRISONER : I . . . am . . . guilty.
The Shadows *pale. From anywhere*
Bankers *in top hats.*

FIRST BANKER : Shares in guilt
On offer
At par.

SECOND BANKER : Shares in guilt
No longer valid.

THIRD BANKER : A bad investment,
Shares in guilt.
A scrap of paper.

BANKERS : Shares in guilt
Booked as a loss.
The Prisoner *sits up.*

THE PRISONER : I . . . am . . . guilty.
The Bankers *fade.*

THE WARDER : You fool !
You sentimentalist !
Were they alive
They'd dance about the gilded altar,
Where thousands offered sacrifice.
You too.

THE PRISONER : I am guilty
Being man !

THE WARDER : Masses are guilty.

THE PRISONER : Then am I doubly
Guilty.

THE WARDER : All life is guilt.

THE PRISONER : But then, it *had* to be
That I am guilty ?

THE WARDER : Each lives his life.
Each dies his death.
As trees and flowers,
So do men
Grow in a pre-ordained
And fated form.
A form created in unfolding
And in its own destruction
Still created. Find the answer
For yourself.
But life is all,
That is.

From anywhere, prisoners in convicts' clothes surround the Prisoner. *A pointed cap on their heads, to which is fastened a scrap of cloth with slits for the eyes, covering their faces. On the breast of every prisoner is a number. With monotonous and soundless rhythm they march in a square about the cage.*

THE PRISONER : Who are you ?
Numbers,
Without a face !
Who are you ?
Masses
Without a face !

A DISTANT MUFFLED ECHO :
Masses . . .

THE PRISONER : God !

ECHO (*receding*) : Masses . . .

Silence drips.

THE PRISONER : (*Screams out*) Masses are fate.
Masses are guiltless.

THE WARDER : Man is guiltless.

THE PRISONER : God is guilty.

ECHO (*far away*) : Guilty—
Guilty—
Guilty—

THE WARDER : God is in you.

THE PRISONER : Then I will overcome this God.

WARDER : Worm !
You blaspheme
God.

THE PRISONER : Is it I
Who blaspheme God ?
Or does God blaspheme
Mankind ?
This law,
This horror, this inexorable guilt,
Entangling man with man !
God,
Summoned to Justice,
I accuse !

ECHO (*far away*) : To Justice.

The marching Prisoners *stand still.*
Their arms shoot upwards.

THE PRISONERS : We accuse.

The Prisoners *fade.*

THE WARDER : You are made whole.
Now leave the cage.

THE PRISONER : I am free ?

THE WARDER : Unfree !
Free !

The Stage darkens.

SEVENTH PICTURE

A Prisoner's *cell is indicated. Small table, bench and iron bedstead let into the wall. Small barred window with opaque glass.* The Woman *sits at the table.*

THE WOMAN :

O path through the ripe wheat-fields
In August days . . .
Wandering in the wintry mountains
Before dawn. . . .
Tiny beetles in the breath of noon . . .
O world. . . .

Silence spreads gently about the Woman.

Did I crave a child ?

Silence stirs.

O cleft and struggle of all living !
Welded to husband—welded to work.
To husband—to foe . . .
To foe ?
Bound to the foe ?
Bound to myself ? . . .
That he would come. I need conviction.

The cell is unlocked. The Husband *enters.*

THE HUSBAND :

Woman, I come. . . .
Come ! Since you called me.

THE WOMAN :

Husband !
Husband. . . .

THE HUSBAND :

I bring you good news.
Your name—my name—is safe from smirching.
The investigations showed you guiltless
Of the crime of murder.
Take courage, your death sentence is not yet confirmed.

For all your crime against the State,
Right-thinking people respect motives,
High principles and honour.

THE WOMAN : (*Sobs softly*)
I am guiltless . . .
Guiltlessly guilty . . .

THE HUSBAND : Yes, you are guiltless.
To the right-thinking, that is certain.

THE WOMAN : To the right-thinking !
In my raw sorrow
I am glad that no disgrace
Falls on your name.

THE HUSBAND : I knew that you were guiltless.

THE WOMAN : Yes, you knew . . .
Respect for motives—so respectable you are—
I see you now so clearly !
Yet you are guilty—husband,
You—guiltier than I of death.

THE HUSBAND : Woman, I came to you . . .
Woman . . . your word is hate.

THE WOMAN : Hate ? Not hate.
I love you—love you in my bones and blood.

THE HUSBAND : I warned you of the Masses.
Who stirs the Masses, stirs up hell.

THE WOMAN : Hell ? Who created hell—
Conceived the tortures of your golden mills
Which grind, grind out your profit, day by day ?
Who built the prisons ? Who cried " holy war " ?
Who sacrificed a million lives of men—
Pawns in a lying game of numbers ?
Who thrust the masses into mouldering kennels,

That they must bear to-day
The filthy burden of your yesterday?
Who robbed his brothers of their human face,
Made then mechanic,
Forced and abased them to be cogs in your machines?
The State! You!

THE HUSBAND: My life is duty.

THE WOMAN: Oh yes, duty, duty to the State!
You are—respectable!
I see you clearly. . . .
You! tell right-thinking people
That they are never right.
Guilty they are—
Guilty are we all . . .
Yes, I am guilty—guilty to myself—
Guilty before mankind.

THE HUSBAND: I came to you. . . .
Do you sit here in judgment?

THE WOMAN: Yes, here, a court of judgment
Comes to be.
I, the accused, I am the judge,
I prosecute, I pronounce guilty
And I absolve . . .
For in the end, this guilt—
Oh! do you guess who bears the final guilt?—
Since of necessity,
Man must desire to do:
And deeds grow red with blood of men—
Man must needs will to live:
And seas of blood rise round him—
Oh! do you guess who bears the final guilt? . . .
Give me your hand,
Beloved of my blood,

For I have overcome myself—
Myself and you.

The Husband *shudders. Thoughts distort his face. He stumbles out.*

THE WOMAN : Give me your hand,
Give me your hand, my brother—
You too, my brother . . .
You . . . gone . . . you needs must go . . .
The last road leads across the snow-fields.
The last road knows no guide.
The last road is motherless,
The last road is loneliness.

The door is opened. The Nameless *enters.*

THE NAMELESS : Have you recovered from delusion?
Have you dispersed your dreams?
Has the sharp knife of understanding pierced your heart?
Did the judge say " mankind " and " I forgive you " ?
The lesson has been wholesome
And I congratulate you on conversion.
Now you're for us again.

THE WOMAN : You? Who sends you?

THE NAMELESS : The Masses.

THE WOMAN : Then I am not forgotten?
The message—the message?

THE NAMELESS : I am to bring you freedom.

THE WOMAN : Freedom!
Life! . . .
We are to escape? Is all prepared?

THE NAMELESS : Two warders have been bribed.
The third, him at the gate, I shall strike down.

THE WOMAN : Strike down . . . for me . . .?

THE NAMELESS : No, for the Cause.

THE WOMAN : I have no right
To gain my life by this man's death.

THE NAMELESS : The Masses have a right to you.

THE WOMAN : What of the warder's right ?
The warder is a man.

THE NAMELESS : As yet there are no men.
On this side men of the Masses,
On that side men of the State.

THE WOMAN : To be a man is plain, is primal.

THE NAMELESS : Only the Masses are holy.

THE WOMAN : The Masses are not holy.
Force made the Masses,
Injustice of possession made the Masses
The Masses are instinct, necessity,
Are credulous humility,
Revenge and cruelty,
The Masses are blind slaves
And holy aspiration.
The Masses are a trampled field,
A buried people.

THE NAMELESS : And action ?

THE WOMAN : Action and more than action !
To deliver—
Set free in Masses their humanity,
Set free in Masses their community.

THE NAMELESS : The rough wind at the gate
Will cure you !
Hurry !
The time is short.

THE WOMAN : You are not release.
You are not redemption.
I know you, who you are.
" Strike down ! " Yes, you eternally strike down.
You are the bastard child of war,

You poor new hangman and high executioner.
Your watchwords of salvation: "death" and "extirpate"!
Throw off your mantle of fine words—
It is worn thin as paper!

THE NAMELESS: The murder-chiefs fight for the State.

THE WOMAN: They do not kill for joy of killing;
They, like you,
Believe their mission.

THE NAMELESS: They fight for the oppressor-state,
We for mankind.

THE WOMAN: You murder for mankind,
As they, deluded, murdered for their State.
Some even thought
That by their State, their Fatherland,
They might redeem the earth.
I see no difference.
These murder for one country,
And for all countries, those.
These kill men for a thousand men,
And those for millions.
Who takes life for the State,
Him you call hangman.
Who takes life for humanity,
Him you enwreathe,
Call moral, a good citizen, a noble and great man.
You even speak of healing force, of holy violence!

THE NAMELESS: Indict those others, indict life.
Shall I allow more millions to be enslaved,
Because their masters may be honest men?
How will it lessen your own guilt,
If you keep silence.

THE WOMAN : By force, the smoky torch of violence,
We shall not find the way.
Strangely you lead us to the promised land—
The ancient land of human slavery !
If fate thrusts you into these times,
Allotting power
To you to overpower those,
Despairing,
Who yearn for you as a new Saviour,
Then I shall know
This fate hates man.

THE NAMELESS : The Masses count, not man.
No, you are not our heroine, our leader !
Each carries his infirmities of origin ;
And you birth-marks of your class—
Weakness and self-deception.

THE WOMAN : No, you do not love people !

THE NAMELESS : Our Cause comes first.
I love the people that shall be,
I love the future.

THE WOMAN : People come first.
You sacrifice to dogmas,
The people that are now.

THE NAMELESS : Our Cause demands their sacrifice.
But you betray the Masses, you betray
The Cause.
You must decide to-day.
Who wavers, helps our masters—
The masters who oppress and starve us—
Who wavers,
Is our foe.

THE WOMAN : If I took but one human life,
I should betray the Masses.
Who acts may only sacrifice himself.
Hear me : no man may kill men for a cause.
Unholy every cause that needs to kill.

Whoever calls for blood of men,
Is Moloch.
So God was Moloch,
The State Moloch,
And the Masses—
Moloch.

THE NAMELESS : Then who is holy ?

THE WOMAN : One day . . .
Community . . .
Free people, freely working together.
Mankind, fulfilling its measure of deeds
Freely.
Work. People.

THE NAMELESS : You lack the courage
To take upon yourself
Action—hard action.
Only by ruthless action
Can this free people
Come to be.
Atone then, by your death.
Perhaps your death is useful to us.

THE WOMAN : I live eternally.

THE NAMELESS : You live too soon.

The Nameless *leaves the cell.*

THE WOMAN : And you lived yesterday ;
You live to-day ;
To-morrow you will die.
But I—
Turning and circling—
I
Come into being
Eternally.
I shall become
Cleaner, more guiltless,
I shall become
Mankind.

The Priest *enters.*

THE PRIEST : I come to help you in your last hours.
The Church does not deny her care
Even to you.

THE WOMAN : Who sent you ?

THE PRIEST : The state officials
Instructed me to come.

THE WOMAN : Where were you on the day of sentence ?
Go.

THE PRIEST : God forgives even you.
I know your case.
Mankind is good, you dreamed.
So you committed nameless crimes
Against the sanctity of State and order.
Mankind is evil from the first.

THE WOMAN : Mankind gropes towards goodness.

THE PRIEST : A lie of decadence,
Born of decay, despair and flight,
Protected by the waxen shell
Of borrowed faith
And threatened with bad conscience !
Believe me, men do not
Even aspire.

THE WOMAN : Men grope for goodness.
Even their evil doings wear the mask
Of goodness.

THE PRIEST : Peoples become, peoples decay,
The earth knows no millennium.

THE WOMAN : I believe !

THE PRIEST : Remember :
Greed of power and greed of lust—
These are the rhythms of life.

THE WOMAN : I believe ! !

THE PRIEST : The world is endless and unchanging
change of forms,
Mankind is helpless, God is his one
deliverance.

THE WOMAN : I believe ! ! !
But I am cold . . . go, now,
Go !

The Priest *leaves the cell. The* Officer *enters.*

THE OFFICER : Here is your sentence.
In spite of mitigating circumstances,
Your crime against the State
Must be atoned.

THE WOMAN : So you will have me shot ?

THE OFFICER : [*As if giving words of command.*]
Orders are orders and obedience, obedience.
The welfare of the State. Peace. Order.
The duty of a soldier.

THE WOMAN : And of a man ?

THE OFFICER : All conversation is forbidden
By my orders.

THE WOMAN : I am ready.

The Officer *and* the Woman *go out. For some seconds the cell remains empty. Two Female Prisoners in convicts' clothes steal in and stand by the door.*

FIRST PRISONER : Did you see the officer ?
What a golden uniform !

SECOND PRISONER : I saw the coffin—in the washroom—
A yellow box.

The First Prisoner *sees some bread on the table and pounces upon it.*

FIRST PRISONER : Bread there !
I'm hungry ! hungry ! hungry !

SECOND PRISONER : Bread for me, for me—
Bread for me !

FIRST PRISONER : A looking-glass ! Fine !
Hide it. Evenings in my cell.

SECOND PRISONER : Silk scarf !
Bare breast and silk scarf !
Hide it ! Evenings in my cell !

The harsh rattle of a volley bursts into the cell. The Prisoners spread their hands wide in fright. The First Prisoner *takes the mirror from her pocket hastily and lays it back on the table. She falls on her knees and sobs out :*

FIRST PRISONER : Sister, why do we do such things ?

Her arms hang into space with an immense helplessness. The Second Prisoner *takes the silk scarf from her pocket and hastily lays it back on the bed.*

SECOND PRISONER : Sister, why do we do such things ?

Second Prisoner *breaks down, hiding her head in her lap.*

The stage closes.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: *The stage directions in square brackets, which I have supplied in a few places where the text does not immediately explain itself, are based on the original Berlin production.*

NOTE ON THE PRODUCTION OF "MASSES AND MAN"

By
JÜRGEN FEHLING

ERNST TOLLER'S drama " Masse-Mensch " was first produced in Berlin at the Volksbühne in September, 1921, under my direction. Two years earlier " Die Wandlung," by the same author had attracted attention in Berlin. But the first performance of " Masse-Mensch " made a far more vivid and lasting impression. The fact that Volksbühne audiences are largely socialist may in part account for its continued success in two consecutive seasons, but undoubtedly the profound impression made by these performances is in the main due to the inherent dramatic power of the play itself.

At first sight, Toller's text seems difficult and ungrateful material for the stage. But it has proved one of the most conspicuous theatrical events of recent years, because its latent dramatic force and truth, revealed by an imaginative producer using the resources of modern stagecraft, gives concrete form to a passionately moved and moving spiritual experience. In order to model the poet's vision in the animate and inanimate elements of the stage and make adequate use of the technical history of the first production, it is necessary to take a brief survey of the author and his work.

Ernst Toller is a social writer. This does not mean that his play is political propaganda, for he is a poet. But his poem, his play, was conceived in the midst of a social upheaval and inspired by the wrath of a war against social injustice. Though his battle cries may at times sound grotesquely, the living breath of anger and sorrow informs his work and gives his politics their universal dramatic values. Toller attacks capitalism as being responsible for the miseries of humanity in war and in peace. The *Woman*, creator and preserver of life, represents the human soul, urged on by dreams, swaying between desires and fears, strong in thought and weak in deed, stumbling through the troubles of our age, but groping through darkness and despair to the hills of vision.

This play of human motives, for all its anger, its yearning and its conflict, has an underlying harmony of hope and love; and demands a delicately vigorous restraint and unity of presentation. The scene and action are universal and free from local detail, so that, in my opinion, not only the second, fourth and sixth acts, which the author designates as " dream-pictures," but the whole play should be staged without realism.

In my production I attempted to suggest this twilight of the soul by an elusive blending of the limelight rays. Not forgetting, nevertheless, that unless the theatre is to

become a laboratory for sensory stimuli, the spoken word must, as always, dominate all scenic effects.

The scenes were severely architectonic, composed of light and space. Platforms and flights of steps, draped uniformly in black, served as a scaffolding for the actors, individually disposed in geometric patterns, or massed in opposition to the protagonists. This provided a visual continuity of scene and allowed invaluable freedom of action. The stage, curtained and carpeted in black, only occasionally opening on a domed horizon with white or yellow lighting, and itself tinged with glowing light, gave the illusion of illimitable space and freedom for the imaginative visualization of scenes appropriate to the changing dramatic situation. The brief transitions from one scene to the next are bridged by veiled music which completes and introduces the mood of each in turn. The second picture closes on a bizarre fox-trot. In the fourth the ghostly rhythms of the concertina develop into a shrill *danse macabre*. The orchestral interlude before the seventh picture dissolves into a violin solo sounding under Sonia's opening lines.

The original production was fortunate in having Mary Dietrich to interpret the character of Sonia, on which the whole play hinges. Her fine dignity of gesture and her beautiful heavy voice transcended the occasional harshnesses of the text and revealed, in their æsthetic completeness, the broad lines of the tragedy.

The whole cast was young, for only the young can adequately transmit the fiery outpouring of Toller's own enthusiasm. If this statement seems to hold a latent criticism, I would say that the author himself desires and need desire no better valuation of his play. It is a prelude to the poetry of world-revolution, a stormy morning which may, in happier hours of daylight, be surpassed in lasting poetic value, but never in the passionate humanity from which it springs.

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TOLLER Masses and Man.

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